DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 342 922 CE 060 458

AUTHOR Wilson, Ruth D.
TITLE Support Systems which Affect the Hispanic and Anglo Adolescent Mother's Decision To Continue Her Educaiton.
PUB DATE Dec 91
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Vocational Association (Los Angeles, CA, December 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Persistence; Adolescents; Anglo Americans; Dropout Prevention; Dropout Programs; Dropouts; *Early Parenthood; *Educational Attitudes; High Schools; *Hispanic Americans; *Mother Attitudes; *Pupil Personnel Services; Social Support Groups; *Unwed Mothers; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

For an ethnographic study of the personal and educational needs of Hispanic and Anglo adolescent mothers and the services affecting their decision to remain in school, researchers interviewed eight teenage mothers--four in a special high school teen parents' program and four who had dropped out of the program. Two young women in each group were Hispanic and two were Anglo. For this paper, 4 out of 10 topics were selected for scrutiny: child care, vocational education, role models, and fathers of the babies. All eight of the participants said they received support in their educational activities. Most of the young women wanted on-site child care at the school program because it would make it easier to arrange to be at school and would relieve anxiety. Others thought it would be distracting to have the babies nearby. All the participants wanted vocational education, especially training in data processing and cosmetology. They also wanted cooperative work experience programs. Most participants found appealing the idea of having a role model, particularly a successful woman in the community in their field of interest who had been a teenage mother. Finally, some of the students were bitter toward the fathers of their babies, usually because the fathers did not support them financially and were not involved with the babies. Teens living with their babies' fathers were more likely to drop out of the school program, although the dropouts said that the fathers encouraged school attendance. The study concluded that supportive school programs are needed to help young, single mothers function as mothers and students. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED342922

SUPPORT STYSTEMS WHICH AFFECT THE HISPANIC AND ANGLO ADOLESCENT MOTHER'S DECISION TO CONTINUE HER EDUCATION

Submitted for ERIC Reproduction Release
by Ruth D. Wilson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- [x] This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- [ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ruth D. Wilson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE060458

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The purpose of this research was to examine the personal and educational needs of Hispanic and Anglo adolescent mothers and the services which impact their decision to remain in school.

Numerous adolescent parenting programs have been developed throughout the United States, yet there is still a question as to which factors have an effect in keeping the adolescent mother in school. Many school districts have implemented programs for pregnant and parenting adolescents; however, only a fraction of those adolescents who are eligible are being reached and the support systems are limited (McGee and Blank, 1989). Priorities of the adolescent parenting programs vary within each school.

Considering the Hispanic population has been the fastest growing, and adolescent pregnancy among Hispanics has reached alarming levels, there has been little research on adolescent pregnancy and parenting. Warren and Johnson (1989) emphasized the importance of cultural influence in the way parenting adolescents react to their situations; however, there appear to be more similarities than differences between Anglo and Hispanic youth according to Codega, Pasley, and Kreutzer (1990).

Age, marital status, and place of residence were reasons found in the literature that some adolescent mothers were able to complete their high school education. As an example, McLaughlin, Grady, Billy, Landale, and Winges (1986), stated that adolescent mothers are more likely to continue their education if they remain in the home of parent(s).

Ethnography This was an ethnographic study which in this case is a detailed study of adolescent mothers. In this type of research, knowledge is developed on which further research may be based. Ethnographic research combines the naturalistic, nonparticipant and participant observation and interviews through documenting everyday experiences of individuals. The ethnographic study is best in situations where the researcher is looking at interaction of students and teachers and the behavior and attitudes of students in the school environment. The Ethnograph, a program for the computer assisted analysis of text-based data was used to aid in the thematic organization of the data.

Interviews without participant observations would not have had the same results and cooperation as those achieved in this study. Some of the participants enjoyed having someone in the home just for the conversation. They were also able to share concerns without the fear of being considered a "bad" mother. True insights and problems of the adolescent parents were brought out.

Population The population for the study was the students currently enrolled in the Teen Parent Program and the dropouts of the Program in a school district with an enrollment of 7,500 students in grades seven through twelve. Four high schools, including an alternative school and six junior high schools feed into the Teen Parent Program.

Of the 62 students enrolled in the program approximately 37 percent were Hispanic, 61 percent Anglo and 2 percent Black. The average daily attendance is about 25.

Sample The study was limited to four adolescent mothers enrolled in the Teen Parent Program and four adolescent mothers who dropped out of the Program and school. As shown in the table, two of the Teen Parent Program students selected to participate were Hispanic and two were Anglo. Two Anglo and two Hispanic students were living in the parental home, while two Anglo and two Hispanic students were not living in the parental home. The dropouts and students were matched on 1) ethnicity and 2) place of residence. Only first time parents were selected for this study.

Program All eight of the participants stated that they received support in their educational endeavors. Michele said,

> "I feel fortunate there is a program here. In some communities you have to travel a long distance to attend. I would rather be in the Teen Parenting Program than regular classes. I like the child development and health classes; parenting group; going at my own pace, going out to schools to be on panel discussions; and having guests come into talk to us."

One concern students had was the change of teacher which occurred both semesters, disrupting the continuity of their studies. As Tracy said, "the people who run the program have a big influence on how you feel about the program." Pam said, "I appreciate the teacher listening without criticism." Two features of the program which specifically appealed to the participants were meeting four hours a day and allowing students to advance through self-paced curriculum.

Child-care For this paper, four out of ten topics were selected. They are child-care, vocational education, role models, and fathers of the babies. The first is child-care. The Anglo dropouts, Traci and Debbie, needed to find child-care as did Brooke and Michele who were enrolled in school and who were not living in parental homes. Michele said, "if daycare were connected with school, my attendance and tardiness would improve."

When participants were asked their feelings about the Teen Parenting Program providing on-site child-care in which the adolescent mothers would observe and participate,

several answered positively; whereas, others had mixed feelings about the situation. Brooke thought it was good because people cannot always find child-care on their own. She remarked, "I would love to see how kids act at different developmental stages and how to decide on appropriate discipline."

Michele seemed excited when she thought about being able to see her baby during the school day. She said, "it would be fine with me if others in the program could take turns caring for my baby and learning behavior. It is something the school should offer."

Amy suggested that it would be nice if the students were able to help watch the babies for assigned times during the day. "You would know where your baby was, how he or she was doing all the time, and be able to learn about your child and others too."

Debbie explained, "It would be better for the baby, more convenient and less of a hassle, if I had been able to have my baby at school with me." She would enjoy having more hands-on learning about child care from people trained in child development.

Pam commented, "You could go in and check on the baby and your mind would be on school, you would not be worried about what has happening to your baby."

Traci thought that child-care should be included with the Teen Parent Program, although she did not want students enrolled in the program to participate in the care of the children. "There are two students I would not trust with my baby!" She strongly felt that child-care workers should be experienced.

On the less positive side, Susan said the on-site care would be alright but being away from the baby four hours is not much. She was concerned about the constant movement of mothers wanting to see their babies, and contrary to what Pam said, did not think the mothers would be concentrating on their school work.

Heather liked the idea of having child-care sponsored by the Teen Parenting Program and said that the mothers could better understand differences in children if observation and participation were included. She also thought that having a classmate take care of her baby was better than someone she did not know. However, she commented, "I really do not know if on-site child-care would have kept me in school." It can be concluded that on-site child-care will help many of the adolescent mothers function as students.

Vocational training A second area of concern is the availability of job preparation. Three of the participants indicated they would like to have access to data processing courses and two wanted training in cosmetology. Other vocational courses suggested by students included

secretarial, business, and marketing where they could go into the community for paid employment. The participants said that they wanted classes where they could prepare for an occupation while going to school. Amy, a currently enrolled student, said that she felt the school needed to give more assistance on job placement.

The four students currently enrolled in school had not held a job. Those who had dropped out of school did have paid employment sometime after the baby was born.

When the students were asked if they could go to school, work outside the home, and raise the baby, Brooke said she thought it would be possible part-time. On the contrary, one of the dropouts said it was hard. "I couldn't, I didn't have the energy," expressed Debbie. Susan said, "If they are in school, they probably aren't working, but if they are out of school, they might be working."

It could be observed that adolescent mothers who had employment following the baby's birth dropped out of school at a much higher rate than adolescent mothers who did not work. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that Teen Parent Programs should include vocational education classes to meet needs of the adolescent mothers.

Role Model The third concern is that of role modeling. It was thought by the majority of the adolescent mothers that a role model would be nice. Michele, a Hispanic student, said she would like to follow the role model in the accounting business to see what the accountant does; and Pam, a Hispanic dropout, said she would like to observe a school counselor to see how things are done and what works out better. Debbie, an Anglo dropout shared, "That would be neat to see the ups and downs of their careers, especially if they have been a teen parent themselves." A conclusion can be made that an exemplary program matching community role models with adolescent mothers should be started. With the support of the community, many doors could be opened for the adolescent mothers. With the positive interaction with role models, positive self-esteem could be further developed.

Fathers The fourth area of concern is that of the baby's father. Some of the students thought, if a classmate had the father of the baby living with her, she was better off than those who did not have that support. For some that was not necessarily true as there were other concerns such as the father of the baby seeing other girls. For some of the adolescent mothers, there was much bitterness toward the fathers since they gave no support, denied being the father, or were critical of the adolescent mother. For others, living with the baby's father was for the financial support (what little there might be). However, those adolescent mothers were

trying to make the relationship a positive one. When the baby's father was incarcerated, it appeared that the adolescent mothers (Susan and Brooke) were not bitter. Maybe there was still a spark of hope, that when he was released, they cold be a family. Debbie and Pam, both dropouts who lived with the father of the baby, said they had no intention of marrying him for several years, if ever. Heather, another dropout, did marry the baby's father.

It was interesting that three of the four dropouts lived with the father of the baby. It might appear there is a relationship between living with the father of the baby and dropping out of school; however, two of the participants said they received encouragement from the fathers to continue their education. Further research could be conducted to determine what factors affect school completion of an adolescent mother who lives with the baby's father.

Conclusion With changes taking place in society and more adolescents keeping their babies, educational programs are being charged with finding ways of assisting the adolescents with their school completion and avoiding unemployment and poverty.

Through this ethnographic study, perspectives and feelings of the adolescent mothers were discussed which would not have been possible using a quantitative method such as a questionnaire.

Only a few of the adolescent mother's concerns, attitudes, and beliefs are discussed in this paper. There are many more perspectives which the adolescent mothers were willing to share because of the time spent in interviews and observations.

It is believed that with proper support systems the adolescent mother will be able to function as a mother and a student.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS IN ADOLESCENT PARENT STUDY

Case	Ethnicity	Residence	Age	High School Level	Marital Status
<u>Students</u>					
Amy	Anglo	parent	16	enrolled in 2nd yr.	single
Brooke	Anglo	acquaintance	17	enrolled in 1st yr.	single
Susan	Hispanic	parent	17	enrolled in 4th yr.	single
Michele	Hispanic	friend	18	enrolled in 4th yr.	single
<u>Dropouts</u>					
Traci	Anglo	parent	17	has 1 year left	single
Debbie	Anglo	boyfriend	19	has 1 quarter left	single
Pam	Hispanic	parent	18	has 2 quarters left	single
Heather	Hispanic	boyfriend/ husband	17	has 2 quarters left	single/ recent marriage*

*Heather was single when selected for the study, however, she was married before the research was completed.

References

Codega. S.A., Pasley, B.K., & Kreutzer, J. (1990). Coping behaviors of adolescent mothers: An exploratory study and comparison of Mexican-Americans and Anglos. Journal of Adolescent Research. 5(1). 34-53.

McGee, E.A., & Blank, S. (1989). A stitch in time: Helping young mothers complete high school. New York: Academy for Educational Development.

McLaughlin, S.D., Grady, W.R., Billy, J.O., Landale, N.S., & Winges, L.D. (1986). The effects of the sequencing of marriage and first birth during adolescence. Family Planning Perspectives. 18(1), 12-18.

Warren, K.C., & Johnson, R.W. (1989). Family environment, affect, ambivalence and decisions about unplanned adolescent pregnancy. Adolescence, 24(95), 505-522.